



State of California  
The Natural Resources Agency  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

**PROJECT TITLE** Sonoma Mountain Ranch Preservation Restoration

**PROJECT LOCATION** Section 27, T6N, R7W MDBM, Glen Ellen 7.5 quad  
Latitude: 38.20 degrees N; Longitude: 122.35 degrees W

**COUNTY** Sonoma

**LEAD AGENCY** CAL FIRE

**CONTACT** Chris Jurasek

**ADDRESS** 2210 West College Ave  
Santa Rosa Ca, 95401

**PHONE** (707) 889-4184

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project involves the on-going burning of the Mitsui Ranch by Cal Fire in Sonoma County. The project area is 630 acres total, with burning being conducted in 10-20 acres each year.

The Mitsui Ranch is leased to, and operated by, the Sonoma Mountain Ranch Preservation Foundation. The property comprises 630 acres at the top of Sonoma Mountain just east of the City of Petaluma. Approximately 70% of ranch property is grassland and has been used primarily for grazing over the past 150 years. A history of unmanaged grazing, and up to 60 years without fire, has resulted in the grasslands on this property to be heavily invaded by a suite of undesirable invasive grasses and forbs. A principle focus of the SMRPF is to conduct research on methods to re-establish native perennial grasslands. To this end, we intend to use prescribed fire guided by research questions. These fires are likely to be small and strategically targeted to facilitate research applications.

The general objectives for using prescribed fire on the Sonoma Mountain Ranch Preservation Foundation property are:

- (a) Increase diversity and abundance of native grasses by restoring the competitive edge to these deep rooted, fire adapted species by burning off the overstory of invasive grasses and reducing their seed bank;
- (b) Remove the overstory of invasive species that potentially shade out developing oak seedlings;
- (c) Kill the standing seed crop of yellow star thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), by burning when 5-10% of flowers are in bloom; and
- (d) Kill the standing seed crop of medusahead (*Taeniatherum caputmedusae*) by burning during the 3-week period when the new seed crop is in the "soft dough" stage, but the vascular portion has dried enough to carry fire.

The project area is entirely within State Responsibility Area, is zoned as ranch land and used as grazing land for cattle. CAL FIRE Type 3 engines and numerous Local Government Engines will be used for the burn and will be present for all burning activities.

The proposed burn area is entirely grazed grassland. There is no threatened and endangered plant or animal species in the project area. No archaeological resources are located in the project area. All applicable burn permits issued from the Bay Area Quality Management District will be obtained prior to commencement of the project. Due to the ongoing nature of the project the Department will reassess the environmental conditions of the project five (5) years from June 1, 2013.

### EXEMPTION STATUS

- ☒ Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 4 §15304 (i)
- ☐ Statutory Exemption (state code section):
- ☐ Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- ☐ Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- ☐ Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

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### REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

This project fits under portions of Class 4 §15304 (i) Minor Alterations to Land.

Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The Department has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, or to utilities and service systems. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at CAL FIRE Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit Headquarters (Attention Environmental Coordinator), 1199 Big Tree Road, St. Helena CA 94574.

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### DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

 6/11/13  
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William E. Snyder, Deputy Director      Date  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

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